

Development, Sexual Rights and Global Governance

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7 “Headless families” and “detoured men”

Off the straight path of modern development in Bolivia¹

Susan Paulson

The millennium has dawned on a new kind of revolutionary era in Latin America, an era in which new forms of organization and civil society are challenging the modern development visions and neoliberal policies that dominated the late twentieth century. This chapter analyzes select development initiatives that imposed normative models of family and sexual identity; describes practices and sites of everyday non-conformity that have been largely ignored by these initiatives; and links these local practices to emerging social movements.

Development policies and projects pursuing a variety of ostensibly unrelated goals have disseminated certain family models that – in a nation made vulnerable by widespread poverty, political instability and foreign interests – have impacted Bolivians’ most intimate practices and relations. This chapter highlights mechanisms through which normative assumptions have worked to discriminate against a significant part of the population, as well as ethnographic descriptions of alternative forms of affection, affinity, and domestic collaboration among two non-normative groups. First are women who manage households that are variously labeled “headless,” “incomplete,” “single-mothered,” or “broken” because the dominant male is perceived to be missing; and second are men who sexually desire other men, and who are sometimes labeled “detoured,” “alone,” “sissy,” or “inverted” because they have not achieved the role of patriarchal heterosexual head of family.²

The idea that monogamous heterosexual marriage marks the zenith of civilization, culminating in a development path begun long ago by promiscuous hordes, is no longer embraced by most anthropologists, who tend toward more relative and contextualized views of sexuality and kinship. Yet public discourse and policy about marriage and family in the United States and Bolivia indicate that not everyone has made this shift. Forty-one US states have recently passed laws and amendments that narrow the definition of marriage (Chronicle of Higher Education 2005), expressing a desire to curb variation and codify an ideal family model constituted by one man, one woman, and their legitimate children, even though less than one-fourth of US households are constituted by such families (Schmitt 2001).

In Bolivia, constitutional revisions approved in 1994 established a “new” multicultural and pluri-ethnic nation, and consequent media campaigns and educational reforms worked to raise awareness about cultural and linguistic diversity. Yet the homogenizing idea that “*la familia boliviana*” is based on a married couple with

children continues to be advanced by surprisingly diverse parties including national family law, catholic catechisms and sermons, indigenist movements that idealize “Andean complementarity,” feminist organizations that locate gender-based oppression in conjugal relations, and national and international development programs that use the nuclear family as the principal unit of analysis, benefits, and accountability. This image is reinforced via what Appadurai (1996) calls “media-scapes,” as billboards, consumer products, television stations, and school supplies broadcast images of families ranging from the stone age *Flintstones* through the contemporary *Simpsons* and futuristic *Jetsons*, all constituted by monogamous heterosexual matrimony and legitimate children, living in private uni-family homes, protected by a faithful dog or dinosaur. These mass messages eclipse realities of most Bolivian households, two-thirds of which (67.6 percent), according to the most recent census, are not constituted by nuclear families (INE n.d.: 64).

In recent decades, some of the same forces have disseminated a complementary model that has also come to be applied as if it were a descriptive category. Starting in the mid-1980s, international development funds were directed to the Bolivian Ministry of Health for HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention campaigns that worked with gay rights organizations and international media to bring new ideas about sexual relations and identities into social consciousness. Among them is the notion of a kind of man called “homosexual” or “gay,” an independent entity with a fixed sexual nature defined by preference for same-sex partners that (in a modern society) should correspond with a marked social identity. This category is expedient for bureaucrats responsible for counting and managing target sectors of the population. And, like versions of strategic essentialism embraced by indigenous and women’s movements in Bolivia and elsewhere, the idea of “gay” as a distinct and inherent type of being can facilitate a sense of natural community or motivate joint political action. In practice, however, the notion has not resonated readily with the ways in which Bolivians experience sexual desire or organize social behavior and relations.

The problem is that development initiatives do not present categories of “family” and “gay individual” as *heuristic devices* used to make a culturally diverse population more legible and manageable for development purposes, nor as *prescriptive* visions used to promote the global expansion of certain cultural ideals. On the contrary, they are widely portrayed and understood as *descriptive* models useful for extending services, rights, and benefits to existing populations. This chapter strives to highlight contradictions between heteronormative and homonormative development models and the actual practices and meanings of people in Bolivia, where the need to understand “alternative” identities and relationships is particularly urgent in light of Bolivia’s restless civil society and rapidly changing political scene, marked by the demise of traditional bastions of social organization, including political parties, unions, and conventional families. In this context, non-normative, or queer, forms of organization and affinity are gaining new relevance and impact, bolstering Lind and Share’s (2003: 57) call for efforts to “queer development” by rethinking models and places of sexuality and gender in development practices, theories, and politics.

Queer analytical framework

Before presenting the cases studied, we set the scene with a brief discussion of this chapter's unconventional analytic approach, some key anthropological concepts, and historical context.

It may seem queer to include in the same analysis rural women who head households, urban men who sexually desire men, and development initiatives from different decades. These phenomena are rarely addressed in the same studies or policies, and tend to be relegated to different academic realms and literatures (women's studies, homosexuality studies, development studies). My unconventional framework is inspired by Bolivia's remarkable social movements, where creative collaborations across difference are advancing intersectional critiques of conventional models and forging new kinds of proposals. Later in this chapter, we explore ways in which expressions and actions of "headless families," "detoured men," and others contribute to what Guillermo Delgado (2006: 18) describes as "transcommunal approaches" in which diverse ethnicities, feminisms, sexualities, and subaltern classes draw from their own positions and environments to articulate responses to related histories of invisibility and exclusion and to threats from the homogenizing bulldozer of modern development.

The situations of women heads of households and men who sexually desire men are not parallel, nor are they two sides of a coin. I ask how exclusion from normative models of identity, sexuality and relatedness, as well as participation in alternative forms of the same, are experienced by people of different gender and sexual identities and varied locations in the nation. At the same time, I consider how these experiences are connected as parts of a Bolivian landscape shaped by colonialism, inequality, and poverty, and by an ongoing push for modern development common to many parts of the world. In order to illuminate connections in this multi-sited and cross-time framework, I draw from a series of ethnographic studies (Paulson 2000 and 2007; Paulson and Bailey 2003).

Anthropologies of relatedness

Amid public debates on family and sexuality, anthropologists are questioning the paradigmatic status that marriage has held in scholarship as well as in policy. John Borneman argues that a tradition in which "anthropologists have read 'marriage' backward in time and across the universe" (1996: 219) has contributed to empirical neglect of people who are not married and of other forms of affinity, and has hindered our ability to theorize human sociality. Roger Lancaster (2005: 23) argues that a search for human universals has driven ethnographers to see marriage everywhere, observing that "Lévi-Strauss thought that if he could isolate the most 'primitive' or 'elementary' form of kinship, he would capture, like a fly in a bottle, what was most 'universal' about the subject."

Redressing a fixation on marriage that has caused scholars and policy-makers to misread or neglect other forms of culturally organized intimacy and relatedness requires theoretical as well as empirical work. Borneman draws from queer theory

to destabilize dualisms (married–unmarried, hetero–homo, civilized–uncivilized) that have structured scholarly analysis, while Judith Butler (2002: 15) forges a new conceptual approach in which kinship is no longer seen as an autonomous institution, distinct from community, friendship, and state regulation.

Whereas kinship theorists had narrowed “affinity” to refer almost exclusively to relations established through heterosexual marriage, recent ethnographies generate new ways of looking at this basic concept. Kath Weston’s landmark study *Families We Choose* (1991), describes ways in which lesbian and gay families build kinship networks through choice and love, while Ellen Lewin’s books on lesbian mothers (1993) and on lesbian and gay commitment (1998) situate non-heterosexual families in the context of US cultural values and practices. Reviewing ethnography of “woman-headed” Afro Caribbean households, Evelyn Blackwood found forms of affinity similar to what I see in Bolivia: “Feminist researchers documented households shared by two adult women (sisters or mother and daughter) and their children (Barrow 1986), by consanguineal units of related kin (González 1984), and by adult kinswomen with kinsmen and close women friends who were regularly present (see Monagan 1985; Bolles 1996)” (2005: 8).

Recent thought on masculinities also help move beyond marriage as the defining institution. In the rich volume *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*, Matthew Gutmann (2003: 3) emphasizes that male roles and expectations are not simply expressions of marriage/family relations, but integral to institutions and ideologies built into unequal structural foundations of local and global society. By exposing the trope of the “patriarchal heterosexual male” whose desire and power are widely (albeit implicitly) understood as fundamentals of all marriage and kin systems, Blackwood (2005) reveals that the prominence of this figure has blinded us to empirical realities of other men and families, such as those she studied in the Caribbean.

Men in these kin networks cooperated with and assisted in the economic and social lives of their kin, but they were neither dominant nor decision makers. Few stories have been told about these men’s lives because they have been viewed as failures, as men who did not attain the patriarchal norm. Consequently, anthropology’s study of men and masculinity has yet to attend to the diversity of men’s gender relations.

(Blackwood 2005: 9)

Assumptions about the primacy of male desire seem to contribute to serious contrasts in the literature I consulted for this study. Whereas sexual desire and pleasure are central to scholarly writing on male homosexuality, they are virtually absent in literature on woman-headed households, in which economic need and child survival are driving factors. Jolly (2000 81) observes that the absence of sexuality from development agendas conveys the assumption that, while people in the global North need sex and love, people in the global South just need to eat, and explores vital challenges of addressing sexual issues in international development without imposing Western concepts and agendas, be they heterosexual, homosexual, or

queer. While cross-cultural scholars scorn the universalizing assumptions about marriage and family that dominate US politics, surprisingly little critique has been voiced about teleological tales of socio-sexual evolution in which people in all societies should develop a certain type of homosexual identification, lifestyle, and rights.

These new efforts to see and theorize kinship and gender help us to rethink the ways and meanings through which Bolivian women and men build relatedness. One feature that emerges as notable in these studies is the importance of culture-specific forms of commensality, and specifically *compadrazgo*, a sacralized system of affinity common in many parts of Latin America (which anthropologists used to call "ritual kinship"). Another is the context-specific identification among people with parallel experiences of marginalization.

Making nation through normative men and families

Like those in other postcolonial societies, Bolivia's leaders strove to make certain models of gender and sexuality compulsory through public education and extension programs (Larson 2005) and military service (Gill 1997). After World War II, new kinds of international policies and programs worked to disseminate and normalize certain family and sexual relations among populations around the world. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights helped to spread marriage as a global ideology and legal category;³ starting in the 1970s, anti-discrimination initiatives advocated women's rights to voluntary and equitable marriage;⁴ and beginning in the 1990s, HIV/AIDS prevention programs advanced the relatively new category "homosexual/gay" as an alternative identity and set of rights. Implicit in these initiatives is a teleological vision of history in which diverse peoples and resources in countries like Bolivia evolve into modern capitalist nation-states; multiform kin groups transform into legally registered nuclear families; and hidden unnamed sexual desires and practices are replaced by either heterosexual marriages or open gay identities. These efforts to drive Bolivia forward on the path of modern development have made deep, and deeply uneven, marks, while indigenous people in the Andean highlands and Amazonian lowlands have resisted, appropriated, and/or resignified elements of these "universal" models (Arnold 1998; Canessa 2005).

In spite of this stubborn diversity, Bolivians in all kinds of life situations and relationships have been seen, counted, and dealt with *as if* they were heads or members of normative families or, more recently, *as if* they were gay individuals. These purportedly universal categories, used to make the processes and reports of national and international agencies more efficient, accountable, and comparable throughout the world, have seriously influenced the success of development initiatives, or lack thereof. Here we analyze two national/international initiatives that used globally dominant models of family and sexual identity to map Bolivian society: an agrarian reform and peasant union system that institutionalized a male-head-of-household model in rural Bolivia starting in the 1950s; and an HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness campaign that promoted a gay individual model in Bolivian cities starting in the 1990s. Because these initiatives ignored relevant cultural realities,

they not only fell short of their stated goals, but produced unintended impacts that exacerbate problems originally addressed.

Land reform and agricultural modernization: moving resources away from Bolivia's "headless households"

For decades national governments and international development agencies have promoted the expansion of individual land rights with the stated goal of improving livelihood and food security for the rural poor. By favoring legal titling for men defined as "heads of household," many of these schemes worked to institutionalize hierarchal marriage and family models, outcomes rarely identified as goals of land reform. Recent research in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia provides evidence that land titling policies have sometimes jeopardized access to resources for local women, exacerbated economic inequality within communities, and/or contributed to ecological degradation (World Bank 2005).

In the wake of Bolivia's 1952 revolution, the National Revolutionary Movement moved to overcome social exclusion that limited national development by extending land tenure, education, and voting rights to poor and indigenous people, and by purging the word "*indio*" from official documents. Predictions that racial distinctions would fade as a modern mestizo nation emerged have been negated by recent surges of indigenous activism, and by the stunning 2005 election of indigenous president Evo Morales. Yet the revolution's remarkable success in institutionalizing new forms of gendered recognition and exclusion has advanced largely unheralded.

Bolivia's 1953 land reform law defined beneficiaries as all Bolivians over 18 years old who farm the land, *regardless of sex*.⁵ Yet during official titling procedures, nearly all the names inscribed were men's. Similarly, "male heads of households" were called to participate in unions overseen by the Ministry of Peasant Affairs. Both arrangements failed to capture the richness of existing cultural systems for land management, decision-making, and collaborative labor in which men and women play active, albeit distinct, roles. James Scott points to long-term implications of this kind of "abridged maps":

They did not successfully represent the actual activity of the society they depicted, nor were they intended to; they represented only that slice of it that interested the official observer. They were, moreover, not just maps. Rather, they were maps that, when allied with state power, would enable much of the reality they depicted to be remade. Thus a state cadastral map created to designate taxable property-holders does not merely describe a system of land tenure; it creates such a system through its ability to give its categories the force of law.

(1998: 3)

Let us take a look at some secondary outcomes of these processes in Cochabamba valleys, where I carried out 18 months of fieldwork between 1988 and 1990, and

returned a dozen times since to continue research through participant observation, household surveys, life histories, institutional analyses, focus groups, and other methods. During this period, the impacts of family models applied in the agrarian reform and union system were multiplied by projects implemented by development agencies that chose to work with official peasant unions and to link technical and financial support to land ownership, thus bypassing more inclusive local forms for organizing labor, decision, and access to resources.

One internationally funded project that I studied in detail promoted the expansion and intensification of commercial wheat production on private agricultural plots through certified seed and equipment extended on credit to land-owners, and through technical training and organizational support provided to peasant unions. For over a decade, the project strengthened wealthier and more normative families through their male heads (Paulson 2004). Ironically, a "women and development" initiative appended to this project in the mid-1990s exacerbated the inequitable distribution of benefits and costs. The extension agency formed an association of women wheat producers, distributed inputs on credit, and provided technical training to female members. Those who participated were married women from families with the greatest access to land and other resources, in which both spouses obtained improved seed packages. These women valued the opportunity to receive institutional support, converse with extension workers, and generate income. One declared, "With the proceeds from the wheat, I've begun selling chicha. Now I have cash all the time and can do what I want to." Yet the extension of benefits to select women was linked to increasingly inequitable distribution of natural, financial, and technical resources within the community. The access of certain couples to a double quota of seed, credit, and training allowed their families to consolidate control over greater extensions of land and water, thus diminishing communally managed resources. This affected poorer families, many of them organized around women, who earned a livelihood by pasturing other people's livestock, gathering and selling fuelwood, and doing other activities that depend on open-access resources.

While development efforts to expand commercial wheat production on private plots helped to enrich normative families with titled land, it also reduced resource access and jeopardized the well-being of other families. An unmarried mother of five explained:

It's not worthwhile to work on the hillsides anymore. There is no fuelwood left, not even grass for the little animals. Now mostly I wash clothes in the river; there are three or four women who pay me by the dozen to wash. And I had to send my daughter, the second one, to Cochabamba City to work as a maid.

By the 1990s, this type of outcome was so widespread in Bolivia and elsewhere that it provoked a whole new wave of development initiatives aimed specifically at vulnerable and resource-poor women. Unfortunately, in the absence of queer critique, the artisan cooperatives and micro-loan projects that typified this women-and-development wave focused more on helping marginalized

individuals than on interrogating the development models that helped shape that marginalization.

This example is one of many cases in which assumptions built into development projects have led to economic and political benefits for people in certain sexual relationships and family arrangements, while degrading or diminishing resources and forms of participation available to others. One might think that, after decades of such tangible incentives, people would comply with the norm. However, in an in-depth survey of 55 households in the Municipality of Mizque, I found that about a third of the households surveyed were female-headed; one-third consisted of families comprised of a man, a woman, and their children; while the rest included a wide variety of relations and arrangements (Paulson 1996). Nationwide, the 2001 census found that 30.8 percent of households were headed by women (Maletta 2005: 5).

The fact that some of the poorest and most marginal households in Bolivia are run by single women reinforces the assumption that non-normative family and sexual status is the cause of their troubles. Yet women without male partners, often excluded from direct benefits of programs such as those described here, do find collaboration, resources, and sexual and emotional intimacy in a variety of ways, some more, some less accepted by society. Profiles of two households in the Mizque survey offer insight into some of these strategies.

Tomasa, 42 years old, lives in an adobe and cement house together with her two children, two grandchildren, and her widowed mother Sabina. Tomasa's 10-year-old son goes to school and helps tend their 28 sheep and five cows, and her 20-year-old daughter, Beatriz, lives at home with her two small sons. Tomasa says that she was desperately attracted to her common-law husband, with whom she lived for several years, bearing two daughters, of whom only Beatriz survives. However, his temper caused trouble and he moved away. For over a decade, Tomasa has maintained an off-and-on relationship with a man in another community. Beatriz also has a male partner, who stays in her room between trips to Santa Cruz where he works as laborer in commercial agriculture. Tomasa's house is on the edge of a hectare of land that Sabina inherited from her husband, most of which is cultivated by sharecroppers. The three women plant a little corn, and earn most of their living through commerce and raising animals. Beatriz buys candy, toys, and other commodities from her mother's *compadre* in Cochabamba, then goes to markets and fiestas where she spreads out her carrying cloth and sells them.

Sisters Miguelina and Angela, both in their forties, live on the edge of a small rural town in adjoining houses. They spend most of each day in a shared back patio where they work, cook, and socialize, telling stories and laughing with friends who stop by, and with clients who come to consume the soft drinks and *chicha* (fermented corn beverage) that the sisters make and sell. Over 15 years, I have enjoyed many hours of shared work and conversation in this patio, and watched Angela's two children grow up in this affectionate home. Now in her early twenties, the eldest daughter is devoted to both Miguelina and Angela, and stays with them when she and her male partner are not away working in the city. Angela's sociable teenage son collaborates with his mother and his Tía Miguelina, who

together attend the school performances and soccer games in which he is involved. Unlike most of their neighbors, the sisters do not own or farm land, nor do they participate in the peasant union. In 1994, Miguelina and Angela served as co-hosts for an important patronal feast. The sisters received the *cargo* (ritual responsibility) the year before from a mature married couple; together they saved and planned for the major feast and, side by side, they carried out the hosting duties in a celebration that gave them great pride and pleasure. Without access to farmland, the sisters drew on compadrazgo relationships and other forms of exchange to obtain the massive quantities of produce needed to host the festivities.

Women heads of household in this study find identity, intimacy, and relatedness in a variety of sibling, friendship, and intergenerational ties, often consecrated through compadrazgo. These ties, clearly vital in developing diverse economic strategies as well as human solidarity, might be reinforced in a new kind of development initiative designed to support a wider range of the population.

AIDS education and prevention: limiting connections with Bolivia's "detoured men"

During the past few decades, people in many cultural traditions have adapted cosmopolitan models of gayness in a process that Dennis Altman (2001) calls "global queering." Media frequently represent this change as progress toward a more advanced social order where homosexuals finally gain the right to express their "natural" desires and identities. Yet ethnographic research in postcolonial and developing societies suggests that people who may not find gay identity any more natural than the missionary position are adopting new identities and lifestyles for all kinds of reasons (Stevenson 1995; Parker 1999).

Diverse factors influence ways in which Bolivian men connect or not with gay identity (cf. Tellería and Pers López 1996). Challenges of economic survival that make it difficult for many men and women to sustain the family model promoted by state and church also limit realization of the independent gay lifestyles presented in mass media. Some men, married or single, engage in homoerotic activities without perceiving themselves, or being labeled by others, as gay. Here we consider a group of men who sometimes and in some places self-identify as gay, most are not married, and their social relations are based partly on shared homosexual desire. I do not refer to these men as "gays" or "homosexuals" because many do not consistently embrace, nor do their lives correspond with, the type of social identity usually associated with these labels.

During the past 15 years, I have come to know a network of Bolivian men who are sexually attracted to men. I have carried out interviews and life histories with a number of them, and have done participative observation in a variety of settings. I also draw on transcripts of life histories of some men in this network recorded by my colleague Tim Wright. These men recount diverse homoerotic desires and experiences, as well as life collaborations and forms of relatedness, played out in varied contexts. Their narratives reveal the influence of cultural roles and rules common in many parts of Latin America, including the distinction between a

masculine-identified *activo* who penetrates and a feminine-identified *pasivo* who receives in homosexual intercourse; the derogatory term *maricón*, applied to boys and men who do not fulfill certain masculine social expectations and to men who are perceived as effeminate or *pasivo*; and a constellation of time/spaces, postures, gestures, and understandings called *el ambiente*, a semi-secret world that flows through and around straight geography. Today these meanings and practices coexist with cosmopolitan terms and ideas about homosexual identities and relations that began to make a mark on this landscape in the late 1980s, later than in other parts of Latin America.

El Proyecto Contra el SIDA (Project against AIDS) was founded in Bolivia in 1993 with funds from the USAID, and implemented in collaboration with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta (CDC) with the goal of education and prevention of HIV/AIDS among men who have sex with men. Researchers sought to identify a Bolivian population that would allow them to measure incidence and prevalence of the virus, and to document a baseline and changes in knowledge and practices. In order to help make the elusive target group more visible, a gay center and activities were developed in the city of Santa Cruz. Some men did gather at the center, see safe-sex films, and get free condoms; however, only a small portion (and by no means a cross-section) of men who have sex with men participated in project activities. Planners on various levels had assumed the existence of a hidden homosexual population whose members could – with the right approach – be identified, gathered, and educated. However, as I analyzed the initiative together with its first coordinator, Tim Wright (2000), we came to understand the project as a struggle to establish a new sexual identity group against a landscape deeply engraved by class, racial-ethnic, and gender differences.

As a dozen or so working- and middle-class men began to gather at the gay center, poor and/or indigenous men were not embraced by the nascent community, and wealthy Bolivians preferred to connect at private parties or on trips to Rio or Miami. Men who perceived their heterosexual manliness to be enhanced by sex with other men declared the idea of identifying socially with homosexuals repulsive. Meanwhile, effeminate or transgendered individuals were not welcomed for fear that association with them would soil the group's image. In sum, this chapter of gay genesis left out many men who were too poor, too rich, too white, too indigenous, too masculine, or too feminine. Retrospection reveals limitations of the homonormative assumptions of international professionals who expected men whom they perceived as closeted homosexuals to "come out" and embrace a new gay identity that would lead to healthier emotional lives and greater social rights, as well as curb the spread of HIV/AIDS. One result of this disconnect between professional expectations and local realities is that many Bolivian men who have sex with men have been left out of sexual health education and disease-prevention campaigns.

This case pushes us to stop treating sexual identity as an independent variable, and instead address sexual desires and practices in the context of cultural realms through which Bolivian men build identity and relatedness (Paulson 2007). Some Bolivian men who establish manly identities and relations through work, family,

and/or homosocial bonding engage in a range of homoerotic behaviors without being labeled – or identifying themselves – as deviants. Others – including men in disadvantaged economic and racial-ethnic positions; men who do not enjoy healthy family or homosocial relations; and sex workers or transvestites with marked appearance and location – are more vulnerable to being labeled according to their homoerotic practices, and to being treated in degrading, sexualized, and violent ways (Wright 2006).

Like women heads of household discussed above, non-normative Bolivian men draw on long-standing cultural forms of organization and relatedness to create identities and bonds across differences of social place and power. The men with whom I have interacted over the years have developed elaborate traditions to celebrate cultural/religious rituals together, including an annual all-night celebration of San Juan (winter solstice), and an homage to the Virgin of Urkupiña each August, complete with religious mass, music, and feasting. The generative use of compadrazgo relations in the context of these events can be seen at a dinner party hosted by a friend named Efraín with the goal of organizing the Urkupiña celebration. The 33 guests were drawn together partly by shared same-sex desire: most were single, middle-aged, middle-class Bolivians who have known each other for years; others included several Brazilian students, two mature US expatriates, and a couple of men from rural backgrounds. After dinner, our host took out a leather book, from which he read the names of those who had held ritual responsibilities for the previous year's celebration, including Godmother of new clothes for the Virgin, Godfather who sponsored the priest who blessed the Virgin, and Godparents of food, beer, and music. As Efraín called out the cargos amid abundant laughter and teasing, people commented on the grandness with which certain tasks had been carried out in previous celebrations, offered to take on specific responsibilities for the upcoming event, and volunteered others for roles. For nearly a decade, now, co-participation in Urkupiña celebrations has helped consolidate shared identity and enduring relations.

To sum up: in spite of sustained financial support, neither the project discussed here nor parallel initiatives developed into strong or sizeable LGBT organizations in Bolivia, posing a notable exception to Lind and Share's (2003: 56) observation that "In the 1980s and 1990s in virtually every Latin American country, small [LGBT] groups transformed into well-established non-governmental organizations (NGOs), thanks to support for HIV/AIDS outreach and support provided by international agencies, ministries of health, and private foundations." Yet, although internationally funded organizations and global media messages have failed to trigger the formation of a new sexual identity population visible and legible to researchers and bureaucrats, Bolivian men described here have built alternative spaces and communities. They have also engaged with other non-normative or subordinate individuals and groups in a remarkable range of social and political initiatives and expressions.

Emerging movements and identities: transcending hetero and homo normativities?

Bolivia's emerging social movements are forging creative alliances that fuse activism for sexual/gender rights with struggles against racism, patriarchy, and neoliberal capitalism, seen as interwoven barriers to a more equitable society and full human expression. A broad sense of "justice" rather than "just us" was foregrounded by the 11 organizations and networks participating in the 1999 "Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transvestite, Transsexual and Transgendered People of Bolivia" and later collaborated with a variety of women's organizations to advocate for Law 810 on Sexual and Reproductive Rights. In 2002, Bolivia's Gay Pride Parades were re-conceived under the more inclusive banner "Marcha Orgullo de la Diversidad Sexual," and by 2007, Cochabamba's principal newspaper described "March for Gay Pride and Sexual and Gender Diversity" as "overflowing with glamour, joy, luxury, color and respect among participants and viewers who lined the Prado" (Los Tiempos 2007).

Two spirited movements have gained high visibility and popular impact in Bolivian cities and media. First is the militant feminist-anarchist collective *Mujeres Creando*, founded in 1990, whose members work through graffiti, street installations, workshops and other participatory methods, in addition to publishing and television. In conscious contrast to sophisticated government discourses on women's rights, *Mujeres Creando* has launched a feminism of the streets aimed to politicize people to fight battles about tangible issues such as access to resources, work, and land. In efforts to build relations with women like the semi-literate indigenous farmers discussed above, *Mujeres Creando* created and distributed a "spoken book" on CD with messages about "feminism for women who are mothers." To advance their work with male sexual and gender identities, they published an accessible book supporting freer expression of men's sexuality (Galindo and Paredes 2002). Moving beyond "women's issues" narrowly defined, they have initiated and supported action including anti-poverty efforts, attacks on racism, and mobilization of debtors.

Second is the *Familia Galan*, a transvestite community of over 30 members who, during the past decade, have used street performances, theater and humor to advance intersectional critiques of multiple forms of oppression and repression. La Familia's energetic public outreach has ranged from collaborating with the Gregoria Apaza Women's Center in theater performances for indigenous youth in El Alto to joining Bolivian women's organizations in Sucre in a public act for abortion rights supported by the Latin American Network of Catholics for Choice. In a BBC interview (Atkinson 2005), Galan member David Aruquipa eloquently addressed their goal of facilitating new ways of seeing beyond conventional identities and family models.

The concept of "trans" is very important to us. By opening up the world of trans, we are calling into question what people consider to be normal or politically correct. We want to challenge the accepted values that try to impose rules

on our bodies. These bodies, that bring our politicised mandate out into the open, are "trans" bodies.

The whole idea of the Family Galan is to challenge the notion of the traditional nuclear family. We are a family with love, fights, disagreements and tender moments like any other family. We are bonded by a philosophy that diversity is essential to family life.

During 2006 and 2007, gender and sexual identity advocates participated in constituent assembly processes to rethink Bolivia's constitution from the ground up, and found unprecedented access to official politics, as recounted in an e-mail that Danna Galan sent to me in March 2006:

We are participating in some initiatives of Evo Morales' new government, with myself representing the trans/gay movement, with great success. We launched the debate about sexual diversity from the valuable standpoint of cultural diversity. We prepared a proposal for public action by the government, and they invited me to implement that proposal from within the administration! So, now I am working as an official, with good possibilities of impacting public policy in this country.

Both the great promise and the formidable challenges of these initiatives are rooted in their zeal to replace conventional vertical mechanisms for categorizing and controlling Bolivia's people with more equitable and inclusive, if yet uncharted, means.

On a parallel path, Bolivia's President Morales and collaborators have diverged from genealogical and essentialist understandings of indigeneity dominant in many parts of the world. Bolivians in and out of political power are invoking an indigenous positioning informed by historical consciousness, relative place in the nation, and ideological solidarity. This approach entails a sense that, because indigenous people have been marginalized and exploited in processes of colonization and globalization, they are in unique positions to develop critiques of neocolonialism and globalization. And, by experiencing exclusion from full participation in the nation state, indigenous people have developed unique capacities to understand other marginalized people, ranging from exploited and unemployed workers to women and men in non-conventional families and relationships.

This chapter draws attention to less-recognized cultural practices and meanings, evidenced in organizational strategies of unmarried rural women and urban men, that appear to be vitalizing these emerging forms of identity and relatedness. Álvaro García Linera (2004), now Vice President of Bolivia, notes that as unions are undermined by fragmentation of the production process, and rural and urban community organizations and family structures are weakened by migration and employment instability, pre-existing forms of cultural and territorial organization are gaining new relevance.

Conclusion

National and international development initiatives, together with state policies and legislation, have brought normative family models into diverse Bolivian lives, and have presented the gay individual as an alternative to the family. Yet census, survey, and ethnographic data presented here show that the practices and meanings of a significant portion of Bolivian households and of men who sexually desire men do not correspond with these official models. This chapter traces the impacts of normative global models on local realities: an agrarian reform designed to improve the conditions of rural peasants empowered men via private property titles, reducing the relative power and resources of peasant women; a productive project for women widened the breach between women who are married or resource-wealthy on the one hand, and women who are single or resource-poor on the other; and a project designed to support gay identity and to educate gay community provoked rifts among men who have sex with men, and reached only a small portion of them.

This study finds that cultural forms of organization and identity that do not correspond with globally dominant norms are deep and widespread in Bolivian life, and that policies and programs that ignore or undermine these rich forms of belonging and collaboration can be counterproductive to stated goals of national development. Programs that strengthen certain types of families and individuals in ways that jeopardize others limit success in improving community well-being and in fighting poverty and disease.

Another key finding here is the importance of commensality and context, relative to biological and legal-institutional factors, in building identity, affinity, and commitment. Bolivians invest great effort to consolidate relatedness and identity through ritualized celebration of food and drink. The generative power of *compadrazgo* is exemplified by Miguelina and Angelina co-hosting the feast of their town's patron saint; and by male friends joined as co-parents in celebrating the Virgin of Urkupiña each August. Groups in this study might be understood as a vanguard of a Bolivian move away from the fixed roles and vertical relations that have characterized party politics, farmers' unions, and conventional family models, and a rejection of patron-client relations described by Albro (2007). This move foregrounds solidarity among actors and groups who share marginal socio-historical positions and experiences, and forges creative collaborations across difference to develop intersectional critiques and to advance new kinds of proposals. Development visions and programs would do well to recognize and support such vital culturally embedded practices and forces.

Notes

- 1 I express my gratitude to the Bolivian men and women who shared their life stories to advance this study. Thanks to John Byers, Linda Farthing, and Chaise LaDousa for motivating me to think and grow with this material, and to Tim Wright for involving me in his early research and analysis, as well as his recent dissertation on homosexual lives and issues in Bolivia. I would like to thank editor Jack Rollwagen for insightful comments on a paper that explored some aspects of this study in *Urban Anthropology*

and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development (36(3): 239–80) and for facilitating fruitful interaction with papers by Albro (2007), Canessa (2007), and Rockefeller (2007).

- 2 Common terms in Bolivia include: sin jefe de familia, familia incompleta, madre soltera, familia descompuesta, and desviado, soltero, maricon, invertido.
- 3 Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the right to marry and found a family, equal rights to and in marriage, and consensual marriage, and states that, "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."
- 4 As one example, see the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Article 16 on Marriage and Family Life.
- 5 Decreto Ley de Reforma Agraria, #3464, 2 agosto 1953, Capitulo 1 articulo 77. "Todos los bolivianos, mayores de 18 años, sin distinción de sexos, que se dediquen o quieren dedicarse a las labores agrícolas, serán dotados de tierras donde existan disponibles de acuerdo a los planes del Gobierno, y siempre que en el término de dos años implanten trabajos agrícolas."

